



# Solidarity

& Workers' Liberty

For social ownership of the banks and industry

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... While the forms of antisemitism expressed on the far Right of politics are easily detectable, such as Holocaust denial, there needs to be a deeper understanding of what constitutes antisemitism in the labour movement... the east London mural which has caused such understandable controversy is an example. The idea of Jewish bankers and capitalists exploiting the workers of the world is an old antisemitic conspiracy theory. This was long ago, and rightly, described as “the socialism of fools”...

Best wishes,

Jeremy Corbyn MP  
Leader of the Labour Party

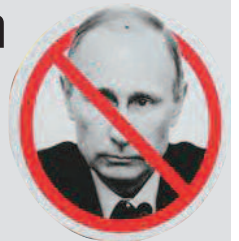
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# Antisemitism is a real issue

## Criticise the “left”, oppose the right

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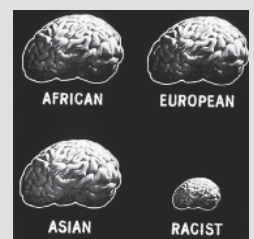
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# Afrin cannot be ignored

By Simon Nelson

**Kurdish forces retreated from Afrin in northern Syria on 19 March after Turkey seized control of the centre of the city.**

On 25 March Turkish state media said they had full control of the city and were now “sweeping for land-mines and IEDs to allow citizens to return.”

The 200,000 Kurds who were in Afrin prior to the assault are likely to be forced into internal exile; many are heading towards Aleppo. And Turkey’s seizure of Aleppo could be catastrophic for the Kurdish cause not just in Syria but across the Middle East. One of the first acts of the encircling armies was the destruction of a statue of the Kawa, a legendary blacksmith important in Kurdish mythology.

Until now Afrin was a largely safe area, as most of the fighting by

Kurds had taken place elsewhere in northern Syria, focused on driving Daesh out from Kobani.

Displaced people, of whom there are now millions in Syria, had previously gone to places like Afrin which had taken Syrian Arabs as well as Yazidis from Iraq.

The retaking of Afrin happened very quickly. The inappropriately named “Operation Olive Branch” was launched by Turkey on 20 January 2018. Compare this to the siege of Eastern Ghouta by Assad which has been ongoing since 2013.

The Kurdish forces dominate the US backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). While the SDF was focused on driving out Daesh it was tolerated, but Turkey was unhappy about the Kurds consolidating their power closer to the Turkish border, and realising a form of Kurdish self-determination. The trigger point was the announcement of a Kurdish-led

border, semi-police force that would have US backing. Turkish forces did not want to clash with the SDF while they fought Daesh so have instead now taken Afrin.

More than 100,00 people have now left with 10,000 still living in Afrin. The Turkish forces and hard-line Islamists within the Free Syrian Army are chauvinists who have already started sectarian attacks against the remaining Kurdish population. There has been widespread looting by the FSA and while properties are looted and the Turkish military refuses to let people re-enter the city.

Dashty Jamal from the Worker Communist Party of Kurdistan, who has taken part in the daily demos outside Downing Street, said:

“After facing 53 days of a war of unbalanced forces, with the help of the Islamic terrorist groups, despite a strong defence from the people of

the city, the troops of the fascist regime of Turkey have besieged Afrin.

“Instead of letting the civilians of Afrin out, the brutal inhuman Syrian regime has blocked each and every safe route from the citizens. Thousands of the city’s population and the displaced people living in the city are confronting inhuman atrocities and crimes. The city of Afrin is part of the autonomous region of Rojava. The bombings and ground attacks by Turkey have led to thousands of people being displaced; dozens of people have been killed and wounded so far.

“Russia, playing a prominent role in the Syrian civil war, has given Turkey the green light to enter Afrin, and the USA, which who does not want Turkey to become Russia’s main and strategic ally, is silent and lets the city fall into the hands of the Turkish army.



**“The European nations favour their NATO ally and have nothing to say. Thus with international permission of agreement and silence the citizens of Afrin are left besieged in the fire of the Turkish and Islamic Turkish-supported terrorism.”**

## Wages: catch-up needed

By Rhodri Evans

**At least briefly, average wage rises have caught up with prices. Just.**

Over the three months to January average weekly earnings grew 2.8 per cent compared to one year earlier. That was exactly the same as the official rate of inflation.

It means only that we have stopped going backwards, and started to stand still. And maybe only for a short while.

Earnings growth reached a temporary peak of 2.9 per cent in March 2010, and another peak of 3.2 per cent in May 2015. In 2015-6 wages consistently, though only slightly, outpaced prices for a while.

But then they fell behind again. Wages are still some 3 per cent below 2007.



Total working-class earnings are still further behind, because of the cuts in benefits, and are still lagging more and more.

**Unemployment remains low, and workforce participation rates high. Profits are strong. The unions should be making a concerted push on wages.**

## No justice, no peace!

By Charlotte Zalens

**Campaigners staged a walk out of the Undercover Policing Inquiry currently happening in the Royal Courts of Justice on Wednesday 21 March.**

The hearing on 21 March as due to hear applications by former undercover police officers requesting anonymity during the inquiry. As the hearing started, Phillippa Kaufmann QC, representing hundreds of “spycops” victims, called on the Judge, John Mitting, to step down.

The Judge has been criticised for being “naive and old fashioned”, for being allowing former undercover police to conceal their identities, his past experience in super secretive courts, and his membership of the men-only Garrick Club.

In one example, Judge Mitting remarked that he believed an officer was very unlikely to have had any intimate relations with those he spied upon because he had been married for many years!

Kaufmann read out a statement on behalf of the “spycops” victims which said: “Our clients are not

prepared to participate in a process where their presence is mere window dressing lacking all substance and meaning which would achieve nothing other than to lend the process a legitimacy it does not have.”

60 protestors walked out of the court to chants of “no justice, no peace”. Protestors have said they will not be boycotting the inquiry permanently, but pressure is mounting for the position of Judge Mitting to be reconsidered.

**You can follow the spycops campaign at: [www.spycops.info](http://www.spycops.info)**

## Rajoy tries further repression

By Colin Foster

**Big demonstrations in Barcelona on 25 March responded to the arrest, in Germany that day, of Catalan separatist leader Carles Puigdemont.**

Supporters of Catalonia separating from Spain hold a small majority in the Catalan parliament, though they are probably still short of a majority in the electorate. Other separatist leaders are in exile or jailed.

**Instead of negotiating and finding ways for a democratic decision by the people of Catalonia, the right-wing minority government in Madrid continues to try to “solve” the problem by repression.**

# Tensions rise amid anti-Muslim violence in Sri Lanka

By Rohan Fernando

**A state of emergency declared on 6 March to try to rein in the spread of communal violence in Kandy, Sri Lanka was finally lifted on the 18 March.**

The violence was sparked by the death of a Sinhalese man, allegedly after being beaten by a group of Muslim men.

Muslim-owned homes and businesses were attacked in a series of revenge attacks, with violence escalating further when two hardline Buddhist monks arrived to negotiate the release from police custody

of accused rioters.

With police unable to contain the riots, Maithripala Sirisena’s government declared a state of emergency, for the first time since the civil war that ended in 2009. They granted security forces and the police sweeping powers to detain suspects. A reported 300 arrests have been made.

Ethnicity and religion are closely linked on the island. Sri Lanka’s Buddhist Sinhalese population are about three quarters of the country’s 21 million population; the Muslim minority is about 9 per cent.

Communist politics have a

long history in Sri Lanka. Tension has been rising since 2012, mainly fuelled by hard-line Buddhist groups, such as Bodu Bala Sena (Buddhist Power Force), which has links with hardline Buddhist group Ma Ba Tha in Myanmar, and Mahason Balakaya.

Such groups are often treated with impunity by the authorities as they are led or financed by Buddhist monks and temples.

More recently, Bodu Bala Sena has been behind various mobilisations against the country’s minority Muslim and Christian communities, whom it views as a threat to Sri Lanka’s Sinhalese-Buddhist “iden-

tity”.

Fears about an increase in the population of Muslims (amplified through social media) have currency. One of the more fantastical conspiracy theories is of a Muslim plot to reduce the Sinhalese population by feeding them contraceptives. The myth has been deployed in campaigns to call for consumer boycotts of Muslim-owned shops. Other groups accuse Muslims of forced conversions and of desecrating Buddhist temples.

Commentators also believe the recent spate of violence points to a renewal of Mahinda Rajapaksa’s Buddhist-nationalist opposition

movement, the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna, which recently secured the most seats and local authorities in local elections. Rajapaksa, the former president, condoned instances of anti-Muslim violence when in power.

**The government’s response does nothing to solve underlying political issues and masks the deeper divisions in Sri Lankan society, the legacy of colonial rule and the failure of the left to organise against the communalist politics that have divided the working class of Sri Lanka.**



# Russian socialists slam Putin's fake poll

By Dale Street

**Vladimir Putin was re-elected Russian President in the election held in mid-March.**

He secured 77% of the vote on a 68% turnout. Sections of the Russian left called for a boycott of the election and were right to do so.

Under the Russian constitution a President cannot serve more than two consecutive terms of office. On standing down in 2008 Putin served for four years as Prime Minister to President Dmitry Medvedev. In reality, he continued to be the decisive source of power in the country.

In 2011 the term of office of a Russian President was extended from four years to six years. The following year Putin was again elected President amidst multiple allegations of ballot-rigging. Now, after the most recent elections, his rule has been extended by another six years.

By the time his latest term of office expires, Putin will have been in power as President (or indirectly in power as the "eminence grise" during the period of his premiership) for almost exactly a quarter of a century.

Putin has presided over the imposition of increasingly authoritarian forms of rule in Russia, a clampdown on political dissent, a neutering of the media, a succession of military adventures, and rising levels of economic and social inequalities.

## APPOINTEES

**Russian regional government has been scrapped and replaced by federal districts run by appointees personally chosen by Putin.**

The powers of the upper chamber of the Russian Parliament have been curtailed, and the election of regional governors replaced by personal appointment by Putin.

Media empires run by anti-Putin oligarchs have been taken over and programmes critical of Putin taken off the air. Internet usage and bloggers are now subject to strict controls.

Critical journalists (Anna Politkovskaya and Natalya Estemirova), human rights lawyers (Stanislav Markelov) and political opponents (Sergei Yushenkov and Boris Nemtsov) have been murdered.

After his re-election in 2012 Putin responded to a wave of popular protest with new legislation which imposed heavy fines on anyone who organised or participated in an unauthorised demonstration. This was ramped up again in 2014, introducing a penalty of up to five years of forced labour or prison.

Putin has also ordered and presided over a succession of overt and covert military interventions by Russian military forces: Chechnya (1999/2000), Georgia (2008),

the Crimea (2014), Ukraine (2014) and Syria (2015). State spending on the military forces has increased correspondingly.

Economically and socially, Russia is now the most unequal of the world's biggest economies: 10% of the population own 87% of the country's wealth. (In the USA 10% own 76% of the wealth.) 46% of the value of all personal bank deposits are held by just 1% of the population.

For a time, the Russian economy boomed under Putin.

But the boom years were ended by the collapse in the price of oil and the imposition of sanctions after Russia's annexation of the Crimea.

Around 16% of the population now lives below the poverty line. A survey conducted last year found that the income of 41% of Russians was so low that they struggled to be able to afford food and clothing.

As an election sop, the Duma passed legislation to increase the Russian equivalent of the National Minimum Wage (NMW).

Despite all such factors, Putin's election victory was a formality. In fact, it was a formality precisely because of such factors.

Putin's control of the media, the imprisonment or murder of high-profile opponents, the top-down control of the Russian system of government, and the success (or apparent success, as presented by the media) of his military adventures have provoked apathy and demoralisation among broad layers of the population.

Along with the expenditure of energy simply to survive, this apathy and demoralisation have sapped the potential for militant opposition.

Putin has also benefited from appearing to have restored stability to the Russian economy, rebuilt Russia as an international power, and reasserted the importance of 'traditional' (i.e. conservative) Russian values, in alliance with the Orthodox Church.

## CHALLENGERS

**The main would-be challenger to Putin – Alexei Navalny, a kind of Russian anti-corruption populist who describes himself as "a nationalist democrat" – was barred from standing.**

"Election campaigning" did not involve political debate. It was one prolonged "get out the vote" campaign.

Putin wanted 70/70: at least 70% of the vote on a turnout of at least 70%. Voters were variously offered the chance to participate in raffles.

The role of the other election candidates was not to seriously challenge Putin but, to lend an appearance of legitimacy to the elections and to help increase turnout.

Grudin, the Communist Party candidate, was a millionaire and

former member of United Russia, the country's ruling party.

Zhirinovskiy stood, again, as the demagogic candidate of the ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia. Other candidates consulted the Kremlin before standing, most notably Ksenia Sobchak, millionaire daughter of the former pro-Putin mayor of St Petersburg. She discussed standing as a candidate with Putin himself.

Even in the most liberal of bourgeois democracies there are limitations on the extent to which

elections function as a genuine exercise in democracy. But the Russian presidential election was in a different league. The purpose of the election was not to provide a mechanism to determine who would be elected as Russia's president.

As the Russian Socialist Movement put it, in explaining its decision to call for a boycott:

"The March presidential elections, like previous ones, will take place under the control of the Kremlin... The purpose of this imitation of an election is to preserve

the regime of the personal power of Vladimir Putin, behind whom stands the bloc of oligarchs, the military, and the bosses of state corporations.

"A fourth term of office for Putin promises the Russian people nothing apart from a further increase in poverty, social disintegration and state violence.

**"For real democracy – not fake elections! Power to the millions, not the millionaires!"**



## The Bonfire of the Democracies.

Alexander Nix, Arron Banks, Donald Trump, Nigel Farage, Boris Johnson and Mark Zuckerberg

# Democracy and social media

By Rosalind Robson

**The scandal surrounding how Facebook shared with a Cambridge psychologist, and his firm (Global Science Research) the personal information of 50 million users, without their explicit consent, has revealed a gruesome network of right-wing academic, political and business connections.**

GSR's data, mined in 2014, was sold on to the data analytics company Cambridge Analytica (CA). The company is partly owned by the family of Robert Mercer, an American hedge-fund manager who supports right wing causes, including Brexit. Its director and CEO is Alexander James Ashburner Nix. CA is affiliated to the much larger Strategic Communication Laboratories Group. SCL is

not shy about claiming to be involved in very many electoral campaigns around the world and to be used by the military and politicians to study and manipulate public opinion, using what are called "psy ops" to provide insight into the thinking of the target audience.

Employees of CA have been filmed boasting of using manufactured sex scandals, fake news and dirty tricks to swing elections around the world.

A former contractor for CA, Christopher Wylie, says the firm used GSR data information to target US voters with personalised political advertisements based on their psychological profile.

On Sunday 25 March, whistleblower Shahmir Sanni told *the Observer* that a digital services firm linked to Cambridge Analytica received a £625,000 payment from

the pro-Brexit campaign organisation, BeLeave. The money came from Vote Leave, potentially violating referendum spending rules. Separately, around £3.4 million was spent by different Brexit Leave campaigns with Canadian data firm AggregateIQ during the run up to the EU referendum; that firm is linked to Christopher Wylie.

It is unlikely that the #DeleteFacebook movement which emerged before the recent scandals, will be an effective form of protest beyond causing Mark Zuckerberg some concern over Facebook's share prices. We've become so indifferent to a lack of privacy, so attuned to having our data mined and so uncritical of the plutocratic nature of bourgeois democracy.

**We need an urgent public debate about democratising both politics and online platforms.**



# Zionists banned from anti-racist demo

## THE LEFT

By Dale Street

**The logic of absolute anti-Zionism played itself out on the streets of Glasgow during and after the Stand Up to Racism (SUTR) UN anti-racism day demonstration of 17 March.**

For absolute anti-Zionism, Zionism is not just another nationalism. It is a monolithic and uniquely evil ideology, pro-imperialist by nature, inherently racist (if not outright fascist), and necessarily genocidal.

By the same token, Israel is not the expression of Hebrew-Jewish national self-determination. It is the product of ethnic cleansing, a settler state which is inherently expansionist, and an apartheid state incapable of reform. As such, it has no right to exist.

This absolute anti-Zionism has resulted in demands that Student Unions should refuse to fund Jewish Societies which fail to disavow Zionism and, more recently, in campaigns for boycott, disinvestment and sanctions directed at Israel, including a boycott of the Israeli trade union movement.

On the SUTR demonstration the focus of this absolute anti-Zionism was the participation of members of Glasgow Friends of Israel and the Confederation of Friends of Israel (Scotland).

Participation by the two Friends of Israel (FoI) groups was not opposed on the basis of any detailed analysis of their politics. It was opposed simply because they were Zionists and defended Israel's right to exist.

For absolute anti-Zionists that was sufficient justification for banning them from the demonstration. In the run-up to the demonstration there had been a concerted campaign to push SUTR (Scotland) into banning the FoI groups from marching on the demonstration.

This was the demand of the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG), Scotland Against Criminalising Communities, the Muslim Council of Scotland (MCS), the Communist Party of Britain (Scottish Committee), the Association of Palestinian Communities in Scotland, and eight "Scottish Jewish anti-racists".

From further afield SUTR was lobbied by the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Net-

work (signatories to its open letter included Tony Greenstein, Jackie Walker and Moshe Machover), Brighton and Hove PSC, Sheffield PSC, York PSC, and Jews for Boycotting Israeli Goods.

But when the SUTR Steering Committee met, only SNP MSP Sandra White backed the demand for a ban: the EIS (the main Scottish teachers union) had threatened to withdraw sponsorship and financial support from the demonstration if the FoI groups were banned.

Organisations which had been calling for a ban then announced that they would be boycotting the SUTR demonstration. According to the Scottish PSC:

"Throughout the world an Israeli flag is seen as a symbol of ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian people and the genocidal siege of the people of Gaza. Flying such a symbol of apartheid on a demonstration makes it impossible for most Palestinians and Lebanese, as well as many Scots to participate."

(The "principled anti-racist" decision of the MCS to join the boycott was marred by the fact that at the very same time its vice-convenor was attending an international conference in Beirut at which the virulent antisemite Gilad Atzmon received an award for his services to the Global Campaign to Return to Palestine.)

## ZIONISM

**On the demonstration itself the Revolutionary Communist Group (RCG) took the lead in denouncing the decision to allow the FoI groups on the march:**

"Zionism is militant racism. It is a complete fabrication that Zionism is not racism and Israel is not a racist state, committing genocide in Gaza. By ten votes to one SUTR voted last weekend to open the door to the Zionists to march today. But the Zionists will not be allowed to march today."

An RCG leaflet, headed "The Zionists Shall Not Pass" (a variation of a Stalinist anti-fascist slogan from the Spanish Civil War) likewise argued:

"Zionism is a racist ideology which serves to defend the Israeli colonial-settler state against the Palestinian people. ... We stand here today to say: Not In Our Name! The Zionists Shall Not Pass! Free Palestine! Boycott Israel!"

When the FoI groups arrived for the demonstration, they were hemmed in against a wall by members of the RCG, the Communist Party of Great Britain (Marxist-Leninist), the Red Front Republic, Class War, and miscellaneous other 'Palestine activists'.

The SUTR stewards did nothing. In fact, the demonstration set off twenty minutes early, leaving the FoI groups kettled in. Eventually, the latter (about 25 strong) and their opponents (whose numbers fluctuated between around 60 and 90 in the course of the morning) set off.

The FoI contingent was repeatedly blocked from advancing by the various brands of 'Palestine solidarity'. The SUTR stewards, who might have been expected to ensure that the agreed right of the FoI groups to join the demonstration was implemented, were nowhere to be seen.

The repeated blockages and delays meant that a demonstration route normally covered in less than half an hour took nearly two hours to cover. By the time George Square had been reached, the SUTR post-demonstration rally which had been taking there had already finished.

For the absolute anti-Zionists the day's events constituted a decisive victory.



The Red Front Republic boasted: "Today in Glasgow a group of Zionists tried to attend an anti-racism march while waving Israeli flags. Ourselves and other groups prevented them from joining the march, and drowning out their bigotry."

Following events from Brighton, Tony Greenstein tweeted: "Excellent that the Zionists weren't allowed to pass despite the scabbing of the SWP", while the Scottish PSC tweeted: "Good on the people who tried to block Israeli supporters from marching. Well done, [a group from] West Dumbarton, stopping Zionist supporters of apartheid Israel."

The RCG was also delighted: "The RCG was proud to stand with others in Glasgow on 17th March to successfully prevent the Zionist [FoI groups] from participating in the annual SUTR march. Questions need to be asked ... but these questions should not detract from our victory."

(In its coverage of the march the RCG also claimed: "The AWL (publishers of 'Solidarity') claims that 'absolute anti-Zionism' is somehow antisemitic without explaining why. It does this only to justify its support for the pro-imperialist, pro-Zionist Labour Party. Zionism is racism!")

Buoyed up by what they see as their victory and by their "exposing" of the SWP (which effectively runs SUTR in Scotland) for failing to ban the FoI groups from the march, the absolute anti-Zionists now intend to split the political forces which have traditionally backed SUTR. According to the Scottish PSC:

**"Since most SUTR organisers are unrepentant and are attacking their critics, the divisions they have sown among the wider anti-racist milieu in Scotland (and the rest of the UK) will need to be discussed and a way forward found on the basis of the widest, principled unity of all anti-racists."**

## Moishe Postone, 1942-2018

By Colin Foster

**The Marxist writer Moishe Postone, best-known for his 1993 book *Time, Labour, and Social Domination*, died on 21 March at the age of 75.**

He was also well known for his critique of left antisemitism.

Born in Canada, he first studied for a degree in biochemistry at Chicago University, but then moved to studying history. He recalled a big student occupation in 1969, and a reading group on Hegel and Marx which came out of it, as turning-points in his development.

He went to do further postgraduate study at Frankfurt University with Iring Fetscher, a philosopher in the tradition of the "Frankfurt School" of Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and others.

From that study Postone developed a critique of capitalism based on Marx and focused on the critique of labour (as labour is defined in capitalist society), which he contrasted to the critique of capitalist society from the point of view of labour which he saw as made by "traditional Marxism". He discussed that critique with us in an interview: [bit.ly/2016-post2](http://bit.ly/2016-post2).

Value-relations in capitalist society, he argued, generated abstract "forms of domina-



tion [which] go beyond the domination of the bourgeoisie over other classes, because they dominate the bourgeoisie as well, though of course the bourgeoisie benefit enormously from them".

Like many writers influenced by the Frankfurt School, he saw Stalinism as a form of state capitalism rather than a sort of progress.

The "pseudo-emancipatory" aspect of antisemitism, in Postone's view, is generated by its superstitious identification of those abstract and impersonal forms of domination with a supposed personal power of Jews. (See [bit.ly/2010-post](http://bit.ly/2010-post) and [bit.ly/2016-post](http://bit.ly/2016-post) for *Solidarity* interviews with Postone on that question).

**After returning from Germany, he spent over 30 years as an academic at Chicago University, where he influenced many generations of left-wing students.**

## A non-reply

**In *Solidarity* 464 we ran an open letter to the Birkbeck University academic Ashok Kumar, replying to his off-hand claim (*Sky News*, 4 March) that AWL is a "chauvinist organisation", that we are "right-wing", and that we support "wars" and "colonial settler states".**

We sent the open letter to Ashok Kumar, of course, and politely offered him space in *Solidarity* to reply. He responded:

"I'm not going to dignify your racist-in-chief's meandering, stream of consciousness whataboutery with a reply especially in light of this: [our website coverage of the 17 March anti-racist march in Glasgow where some left activists "kettled" groups carrying Israeli flags to stop them joining the march, see this page]."

**No evidence. No reasoning. No argument. But that's the way with that school of thought.**



# Antisemitism is an issue

**It is strange to see things for which *Solidarity* and Workers' Liberty have long been despised and abused, among much of the left, the kitsch left, now being brandished as weapons against the Corbyn Labour Party by our political enemies.**

Certainly "left-wing" antisemitism, expressed as "anti-Zionism", is a malignant and powerful force on the left. Especially among the would-be revolutionary left, who on many other things say what we say.

The core of the antisemitic infection is denial that Israel has a right to exist — insistence that it is a historically illegitimate state which should be done away with if it continues to refuse to dismantle itself. A whole cluster of attitudes and positions have their roots there.

It is an infection carried by the "revolutionary" absolute anti-Zionist left into broader areas. These ideas need to be stigmatised and driven out of the labour movement. The political, intellectual and moral health of the labour movement demands no less than that.

The emergence of the Corbyn Labour Party is the greatest and most progressive development in British politics for a very long time. Many people new to politics have been drawn into activity around the rejuvenating Labour Party, for the first time.

That the "left-wing" antisemites should not be allowed to infect newcomers and young people with their political sickness is a to-be-or-not-to-be question for socialists, for consistent democrats, and for the labour movement.

Those who want the destruction of Israel and advocate, or would support, an Arab or Islamic war of extermination against it



should not be members of any working-class or socialist party. It is necessary to educate and re-educate the left and the labour movement, to get the movement to see, reject, and fight their "left-wing" antisemitism.

But this issue is now being used as a stick with which to beat Corbyn and the Labour Party he leads. Corbyn is not one of the tribe of left-wing antisemites. He has a history of association with some left-wing campaigns

and formations which are based in that tribe; but Jeremy Corbyn believes not in the destruction of Israel but in the creation of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel — the "two states" settlement.

In his letter of 26 March to the Jewish Leadership Council and the Board of Deputies of British Jews (bbc.in/jc-2603), he quotes August Bebel that antisemitism is the socialism of the fools.

Yet Corbyn is here ambivalent on the Israel-Palestine dispute. In the letter he argues that "newer forms of antisemitism have been woven into... criticism of Israel, particularly in relation to the continuing dispossession of the Palestinian people". That could refer to the Israeli settlement program in the West Bank, or to what the "left" antisemites mean by such words, that Israel's existence as such is the dispossession.

## DENOUNCE

**The Jewish Board of Deputies has a right, a duty, to watch for and denounce every kind or hint of antisemitism.**

Its intervention in the Labour Party is, nonetheless, extraordinary, and can't but be a variant of joining in with the right-wing gang kicking Corbyn.

There is antisemitism in the Tory party. What has the Board of Deputies done about that? Or planned to do?

Suspicion that the Board of Deputies acts with anti-Labour and anti-Corbyn bias will not help the fight against antisemitism in the Labour Party. The right to criticise Israel cannot be surrendered or allowed to be stifled.

Blatant and persistent antisemites should be expelled from the Labour Party. But more than that is needed. Jeremy Corbyn should take the lead in initiating an educational campaign in the Labour Party and in the broader labour movement on the complex of questions involved, including Israel-Palestine.

**It is to be hoped that Corbyn's commitment to Jewish communal leaders is an indication that such a campaign will now happen.**

# Big rise in antisemitism since 2013

**The year 2017 saw a 60% increase in antisemitic incidents in the USA, and a doubling of the number of cases of antisemitic harassment, vandalism, and attacks in schools and on college campuses.**

Over 1,000 of the 1,986 antisemitic incidents reported and collated by the Anti-Defamation League happened in schools or universities.

The total number has been increasing since 2013, and is now over two and a half times its level then (bit.ly/adl-2017).

The rise parallels, and must surely be driven by, the surge in "America First", anti-"globalist" feeling flagshipped by Donald Trump. Many nationalist-minded people, including some who consider themselves left-wing, have a prejudice against Jews as somehow representing the global and the cosmopolitan.

Trump's friendliness to the current right-wing Israeli government does not necessarily clash with anti-Jewish feeling among Trump supporters. The "Christian Zionists" see the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine with its capital in Jerusalem as a necessary step towards a "Second Coming" after which the Jews will disappear by all being converted to Christianity.

In the UK, the Community Security Trust recorded 1,382 antisemitic incidents in 2017, its highest figure since it started in 1994, and, as in the USA, two and a half times the figure



of 2013. The date 2013 figures here, perhaps, as the turning point when, on a world scale, right-wing nationalist responses to the 2008 capitalist crash started to outpace left-wing internationalist responses.

The UK has seen no rise of antisemitic incidents in schools and universities comparable to that in the USA: in the UK those are fewer than 10% of the total (bit.ly/cst-2017).

In cases where CST has a description of the antisemitic harasser or attacker, the majority were "white, north European". In only 10% of the total incidents could the motivation be identified as specifically far-right, and in only

1% as Islamist. There are many active antisemites who do not see themselves as far-right or Islamist.

In 2015 the French left activist Yves Coleman wrote a detailed survey of the rise of anti-Muslim racism and antisemitism in Europe since the 1990s (bit.ly/yves-2015).

Muslims in Europe are generally poorer and of more recent migrant origin than Jews, and they suffer social discrimination and institutional racism, even, in some countries, religious discrimination, which Jews do not. However, the (incomplete) figures gathered from sources across the continent show many

more antisemitic incidents, in ratio to the small Jewish populations, than anti-Muslim incidents in ratio to the larger Muslim minority.

**Neither faces the level of hostility that the Roma do. But the figures make clear that antisemitism is not a vanishing residue, and not an affair only of the neo-Nazi or explicitly far-right fringe.**

**Solidarity 466 will be out after Easter, on 11 April.**



# 21 lies the ostensible left tells itself

By Sean Matgamna

**A central fact of our political situation is that the left, especially the ostensible revolutionary left, is a major source of anti-semitism — they say “anti-Zionism” — in the country and in the labour movement, including the Labour Party.**

Jeremy Corbyn has admitted that there are pockets of antisemitism in the Labour Party. On the self-described revolutionary left you will find only pockets of opposition to the “anti-Zionism” which becomes antisemitism — AWL for example.

The root of “left-wing” antisemitism is the belief that Israel should not exist, that it is a historically non-legitimate state, and that it should be put out of existence as soon as possible and by any means necessary. It is an “absolute” anti-Zionism, and also, though vicariously and secondarily, an “absolute” Palestinian and Arab nationalism.

Around that core of modern “left-wing” antisemitism there is a cluster of ideas and attitudes, that is, of ideological lies. Here I will examine some of them.

**Ideological lie 1:** Socialists and decent liberals should back the Palestinians. That means opposing Israel, and that’s all there is to it. The talk about antisemitism is a device to blur the suffering of the Palestinians and to undercut support for them.

**Truth:** Socialists and decent liberals do back the Palestinians! That means a Palestinian state side by side with Israel, and support for Palestinian rights against the Israeli policies which prevent the Palestinians getting a state.

**Lie 2:** Anti-imperialists, socialists, and decent liberals should support the destruction of Israel, because that is the only way to win justice for the Palestinians.

**Truth:** One of the central problems on the left is that the “destroy Israel” strand dominates, and not the “help the Palestinians” strand.

The absolute anti-Zionist left rejects the “two states” policy of the Palestine Authority and of most Palestinians. That left makes the political choice of allying with Islamic and Arab chauvinists for whom the living Palestinians don’t matter — for whom those living Palestinians are a cipher, a token, of Islam’s war with the infidels or of that left’s “anti-imperialism”.

Israel is not going to abdicate. It is not going to be destroyed this side of a fundamental shift in world forces and of a loss of will in Israel to defend itself and survive. The “destroy Israel” position thus condemns the Palestinians to never, in calculable time, gaining a Palestinian state, although a Palestinian state alongside Israel was stipulated in the 1947 United Nations resolution. To never making peace and being able to live in peace.

Those who make a solution for the Palestinians depend on the destruction of Israel are not friends of the Palestinians. Since the late 1980s, the secular Palestinian nationalists have set out the rational political demand: two states.

**Lie 3:** A single state in the territory of pre-1948 Palestine, with religious but not national rights for Jews, is the just solution and the best solution.

**Truth:** It is no solution to anything. There are now two version of a “one-state” solution: the fantasy one of an Israel-conquering Arab state, and the one that may well come

about — a Greater Israel with a large long-term Arab minority. The Israeli right seems to be reconciling to that second option.

The prospect then would be for ongoing oppression, conflict, and strife for generations to come.

The main blame here belongs to Israel because, from its present position of strength, it could probably arrange a more or less just two-states settlement, and it doesn’t.

But if the “Greater Israel” outcome happens, a lot of the blame would belong with the Arab states which have again and again rejected reconciliation with Israel.

**Lie 4:** The left is pro-Palestinian, that’s all. This is not antisemitism but a form of necessary anti-imperialism.

**Truth:** Socialists and democrats should indeed support the Palestinians and their rights. But in “left” antisemitism, hatred of Israel becomes predominant, overshadowing pro-Palestinian sentiment, tainting it.

The ostensible left finds itself allying with Arab-chauvinist and Islamic-chauvinist attitudes of absolute or even mystical “anti-Zionism”. *Socialist Worker*, for example, welcomed the Hamas victory in Gaza over the more secular Palestinian politicians!

In real politics, the last thing the absolute anti-Zionists are, is pro-Palestinian. Their drive is their hostility to Israel — a program of destroying the “Zionist state” that is in reality the opposite of being pro-Palestinian.

## ANTI-WAR

**Lie 5:** The absolute anti-Zionist stance is only an application to Israel of a general anti-war stance.

**Truth:** The kitsch left thinks that any Arab or Islamic war on Israel is justified. Anybody’s war on Israel. They are warmongers!

**Lie 6:** The left is critical of Israel and Zionism. It is a polemical slander to equate that with antisemitism.

**Truth:** Criticism of Israel is not antisemitism, or not necessarily so. The antisemitic “left” does not just criticise Israel. It uses sometimes valid and necessary criticisms of Israel as arguments for why Israel should be destroyed. As arguments deployed in advocating the destruction of Israel and backing any Arab or Islamic force that wants to go to war with Israel.

That “anti-Zionism” is antisemitism. It implies and generate a comprehensive hostility to most Jews alive today, because they will not denounce Israel out of hand.

Many “left” antisemites equate antisemitism exclusively with Nazi-style racism, or Stalinist scapegoating. They sincerely hate those antisemitisms — even while they themselves are antisemitic in their own way.

**Lie 7:** Anti-Zionism is only championing of the Palestinians, of righteous Palestinian nationalism and of those Arab or Islamic forces that take their side. As Lenin said, the nationalism of the oppressed is not the same as the nationalism of the oppressors.

**Truth:** The two-states policy of the Palestinian Authority — an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel — is the Palestinian nationalism of the real world.

One of the strange things here is that the anti-racist kitsch left have no qualms about allying with the vilest Arab purveyors of old Nazi antisemitism. The Arab press, in many countries, is awash with directly appropriated Nazi antisemitism. The kitsch left tacitly accepts that, without qualm or comment.



**Anti-semitism continued after the Second World war. Desecrated graves, Prestwich, 1965.**

The racism, even the Nazi-like racism, of the oppressed (which includes rich and powerful Arab states) is not the same as the racism of the oppressor? That is the intellectual track-system on which this strange tolerance runs. It is one example of the strange phenomenon that the kitsch left is not inhibited or even troubled to find itself in pursuit here of those, the “Zionists”, the Jews, who have over centuries been persecuted and murdered by reaction.

They are not inhibited by finding themselves, on this, close to the crazed American far right, who think that countries like the USA are ruled by Jewish “Zionist Occupation Governments”.

**Lie 8:** Antisemitism is not a real problem now. It is just a stick used to beat pro-Palestinians. The left-wingers accused of antisemitism are not racists!

**Truth:** The left is not racist as such. It is however difficult to imagine what degree of extra hostility to Israel and to “Zionists” (Jews with a reflex identification with Israel) the “left” would generate if it were racist.

The fundamental truth is that antisemitism has been in the ideological subsoil of Christian Europe for many, many centuries and is there still. “Who condemned Jesus Christ to death? Pontius Pilate did it as the desire of the Jews” — that response only recently ceased to be part of the catechism taught to Catholic children. The basic idea, and spin-offs from it, are still there.

Christian antisemitism played a part in the Nazi massacre of Jews in countries such as Hungary, Poland, and Romania.

There is a large repertoire of antisemitic themes there for the appropriation — the Jews rule the world through the banks, and so on. The internet is awash with virulently antisemitic conspiracy theories. There is always demand for scapegoats and universal villains, and “the Jews” and “the Zionists” have been the perennial scapegoats.

Absolute anti-Zionism is a form of antisemitism. It is hostile to that big majority of Jews alive today who will not accept that Israel should be destroyed and that Zionism and Israeli nationalism are racism. It backs militant action against “the Zionists”, meaning in the first place Israel, but not only Israel.

In 1945, the revelation of the Nazi death factories for Jews horrified much of the world. It also immediately unleashed aggression against Jews, such as street attacks, in the USA for instance. In Paris and in Poland

Jews returning from the camps met with hostile riots. Polish Christian antisemitism was in gear with German antisemitism, even though the Nazis had classified all Poles as sub-human.

Small-scale anti-Jewish pogroms took place in Britain, in Manchester, Liverpool, and Leeds, in 1947. Mobs surged through Jewish areas, Cheetham Hill in Manchester, for example, breaking windows and assaulting people.

Organised by Mosley fascists, those attacks were connected to the war between Jewish guerrillas and the British Army in Palestine.

Antisemitism is on the rise in Europe, and in Britain too. The “left-wing” element here is an “anti-imperialism”, a willingness to accommodate to Islamic and Arab anti-Westernism that demonises Israel as imperialism incarnate, just as in the past Jews were denounced as the incarnation of money-madness and money-power.

**Lie 9:** The Holocaust is being used cynically to serve Israel and Zionism, to disarm critics, and to facilitate the growth of Zionist influence and control. Anyway, it was long ago. Leave it alone.

**Truth:** The Holocaust is a major fact of recent history. Of course it looms large in the awareness of all half-way decent thinking people. Of course it looms large in the minds of the relatives of those engulfed in it.

**Lie 10:** The Holocaust was a German affair, nothing to do with the broader world. As Ken Livingstone said: “Hitler went mad and started killing Jews”.

**Truth:** The Holocaust was the work of the German state. That hard fact should not be eroded or lost sight of. But the Holocaust was not just a German affair. There was an international and historical aetiology to it. The rest of the world refused to let in Jews who tried to flee from the Nazis.

In 1924 the USA legislated to limit annual immigration from any country to 2% of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States as of the 1890 census. An openly stated objective was to stop Jewish immigration, and it was cut to a trickle. A move in 1939 to let in 20,000 child Jewish refugees was stifled in Congress.

In summer 1939 the St Louis sailed from Hamburg with a cargo of 900 Jews seeking refuge. They had transit visas to stay in Cuba until they could get the USA visas for which they had applied.



# on Israel-Palestine



**Millions of Palestinians remain in refugee camps because Arab states do not let them integrate. Jordan is home to about 1.9 million Palestinians; 337,000 live in camps.**

A tremendous antisemitic demonstration in Cuba led the Cuban government to refuse to let them land. They sailed on to the USA, could see the lights of Miami from the ship, and cabled President Franklin D Roosevelt to let them in. They received no answer from FDR. The State Department did reply, accusing them of trying to jump the quota queue.

The ship went back to Europe, on the eve of World War Two. Into the Holocaust. The Nazis mocked those in other countries who protested at Nazi antisemitism: they didn't want Jews, either.

Antisemitism played a big part in stopping Jewish migration to the USA and elsewhere, and in corralling Jews for Hitler's "Final Solution". The aetiology of the Holocaust was not created by Germany or by the Nazis alone.

## HOLOCAUST

**Lie 11: The Holocaust was not a unique event. But the Jews won't "let go" of their tragedy because it justifies Israel.**

**Truth:** As is often said, there have been many holocausts, for instance that associated over centuries with the slave trade and its effects on Africa. There have been many genocides, of the Armenians by the Turks in World War One, of Roma people by the Nazis in World War Two. In the mid 1840s there was a "holocaust" in Ireland when over a million were allowed to starve to death. There was even an element of intention in it. The British government passed tax laws intended to force reluctant landlords to evict tenants to wander the roads and die in a starving and cholera-ridden country.

Not forgetting the Roma or the Armenians, nothing compares in scale, organisation, intensity, or the number of casualties, with what the German Nazis did to six million

Jews between mid-1941 and early 1945.

But here we are not engaged in an academic discussion of history. The Holocaust-mitigators want to "forget" the Holocaust in order to portray the creation of Israel as an almost motiveless crime against the Arabs and not what it was, a reaction by masses of hounded people to the greatest crime in recorded history and the events that led up to it.

The absolute anti-Zionist left does not deny that the Holocaust happened. But it tries in various ways to minimise it, to turn it into a sort of historical hologram, something without ongoing effects.

**Lie 12: The Arabs shouldn't "pay for" European crimes against the Jews. If the Jews are to have a state, why should it be in Palestine?**

**Truth:** There isn't any "should be". There is just "is" and "was". That is how it turned out. The world closed its doors to the Jews, and Palestine became the refuge of Jews fleeing antisemitism, in the 1920s from Poland, in the 1930s from Germany, and in the 1940s from all Europe. Jerusalem had a central place in their religion. There was always a Jewish minority in Palestine, and in 1900, before any large Zionist colonisation, Jews were a majority in Jerusalem.

**Lie 13: It is a myth that Jews had ancestral ties in Palestine. Modern Jews are the descendants of the Khazars, a Turkic people of central Asia, not of ancient Palestinians.**

**Truth:** The idea that the Khazars were the ancestors of the Azhkenazi Jews is interesting. Like most people who encounter it, I have no way of judging what degree of truth there is in it.

It is entirely irrelevant to today's political arguments about Israel!

Israel was created by the Jewish people in the mid 20th century for immediate reasons that are not affected by question of distant historic origins. That question of origins has no bearing on current politics, except perhaps for religious mystics. The use of it in current politics is another part of the attempt to delegitimise Israel.

**Lie 14: The Zionists collaborated with the Nazis; the Nazis liked the Zionists, as Ken Livingstone rightly said.**

**Truth:** That is one of the "constructions" of the rabid Stalinist antisemitic campaign of 1949-53. It is a fact of history that some anti-semites, for instance the Irish antisemite Arthur Griffith, the founder of the first version of Sinn Fein, polemically contrasted the "manly" Zionist nationalists with non-Zionist, typical Jews, equating the latter with the hostile caricatures of Jews dear to the anti-semites. The idea that this fact taints Zionism or Israel is a product of pure absolute anti-Zionist malice.

The Nazis killed Zionist Jews as they killed other Jews. As a matter of fact, it was Palestinian Arab anti-Zionists who collaborated with the Nazis. During World War Two the official leader of the Palestinian Arabs, the Mufti of Jerusalem, organised Bosnian Muslims as Nazi soldiers. But of course that fact does not in any degree negate the right of the Palestinian Arab people to their own state now.

## UNIQUE

**Lie 15: The driving-out of the Palestinian people in 1948 was a unique crime. Because of it, there are now six million Palestinian refugees.**

**Truth:** In and around the 1948 war between the newly-declared state of Israel and five Arab states, 750,000 Palestinian Arabs were driven out or fled from the territory on which Israel now exists.

Some fled, in part at least, because they expected the Jews to do to them what the invaders said they would do to the Jews. But there was nothing unique about it, particularly not at the time.

Over the years after 1948, about 600,000 Jews were driven out or fled from Arab states in which they and their ancestors had lived for generations, sometimes for centuries. Most of them went to Israel. There was, over a number of years, in effect, a brutal population exchange.

Vast population movements took place in central and eastern Europe at the end of World War Two. European Jews were uprooted and sent to the murder factories. Survivors from 1945, perhaps half a million of them, were housed in Displaced Persons' camps, some of them former Nazi concentration camps, and got out only when it was possible for them to go to Israel in 1948 and after.

In and around 1945, thirteen million Germans were driven out of parts of Eastern Europe where their ancestors have lived for centuries — from the Sudetenland, from Poland, and from East Prussia (now part of Poland, or, some of it, Russia).

They were uprooted at gunpoint, driven onto the roads or railway wagons, and forced to flee to a ruined and starving Germany. Perhaps as many as half a million of them died in the forced migration. One reckoning has it that one in four of the people of Germany today are *immediate* descendants of those 13 million expelled.

Only sections of the German right — what some called the German revanchists — ever advocated recovery of Germany's lost lands in the east.

**Lie 16: Israel is a colonial-settler state, which drove out the original population.**

**Truth:** During the period of British rule, the

arrival of Jewish migrants in Palestine was accompanied by migration also of Arabs into Palestine, attracted by economic growth there. The driving-out of 1948 occurred in the midst of an invasion of the newly-declared Israeli Jewish state by five Arab armies — those of Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq — a war to conquer and, self-declaredly, a war to drive out the Jews.

**Lie 17: The fact that the Palestinians have never accepted their loss makes this a unique case. Israel is entirely responsible for the fate of the Palestinian refugees and all the bad things the Palestinians have experienced in the last 70 years.**

**Truth:** The reason the Germans accepted their expulsion was that "return" would have involved war with Russia and its satellites.

Israel was not solely responsible for the development of the Palestinian refugee phenomenon. Millions of Palestinians (1.5 million today) remained in refugee camps because the surrounding Arab states in which they lived would not let them integrate, as the 13 million Germans were eventually (though not easily) integrated. Some host Arab states would not even left the Palestinian refugees work.

To the Arab states, even after their defeat in 1948, overcoming Israel seemed possible. Palestinian "return" was, for them, far more practical politics than a war for return with Russia was for the Germans.

**Lie 18: The six million or more Palestinian people scattered around the Middle East and beyond it have an inalienable right to "reclaim" the territory of pre-1948 Palestine, including the entire territory of Israel.**

**Truth:** The corollary is that a majority of the people born in Israel and living there, many with their parents and grandparents also born there, have no right to be there, or anyway fewer rights than the six million "refugees", most of them born outside Israel or Palestine. Why? How? How can the descendants of Palestinians have more rights in what is now Israel than the generations who have been born there and built up a society there?

Calculating from mortality statistics, of the Israeli Jews of 1948 there are maybe 200,000 still alive; of the Palestinian Arabs who fled or were driven out, somewhat fewer. By what principle of justice, or common sense, do the surviving Palestinian refugees of 1948 get to pass on rights over the territory of Israel greater than the rights of people born there, living there, and working there, to their second or third generation descendants?

**Lie 19: The creation of Israel was a racist crime, something uniquely evil, akin to the Nazi ill-treatment of the Jews in Europe. That crime must be undone.**

**Truth:** The term "racism" is now often a bludgeon rather than a clear definition of anything. There is a continuum that begins with mild partiality and goes through open-minded patriotism to rabid nationalism, then to murderous chauvinism, and to racist classification of the "other" as inferior by their genes or even unfit to live. Calling all varieties of Israeli nationalism "racism" is an ideological blow on behalf of Arab and Islamic nationalists and chauvinists in an ongoing war of ideas and definitions.

The idea that Israel is uniquely racist is code for denying the rights of an entire people and supporting their subjugation, for maintaining that they deserve to be killed if they refuse to accept being conquered, deprived of self-rule and national rights, and forced, the women among them especially, to live according to hard-line Islamic rules in an Arab-Islamic state.



From page 7

The Israeli Jews are nationalists. Some of them, as of other peoples, are racists. To damn the whole people as “racist” for having and acting on a distinct sense of their own identity is a denial of rights, not an upholding of them.

**Lie 20:** The Palestinians were destroyed as a nation, and justice demands the restoration of pre-Zionist Palestine.

**Truth:** It is right and proper that left-wing people side with the defeated and the weaker people in the Israel-Palestine conflict. We do that. We back the Palestinian Authority’s call for a Palestinian state alongside Israel.

What justice — justice for both peoples — demands is an independent Palestinian state, in contiguous territory, side by side with Israel.

The elevation of Palestinian nationalism into a supra-historical absolute is a pernicious nonsense. Until 1918 Palestine was a backwater part of the Turkish province of Syria. It was only a geographic term. There was no Palestinian nation distinct from general Arab or “south Syrian” identities. Nobody claimed that there was.

The existing Palestinian nation emerged in the conflicts of the mid 20th century. Palestine, as a modern political unit, existed as a British-ruled territory for only three decades, 1918 to 1948. The idea that that political unit is something basic and fundamental is an ideological artefact created in the Israeli-Arab conflict.

**Lie 21:** Antisemitism is a right-wing phenomenon. To talk about left-wing antisemitism is absurd.

**Truth:** Yes, right-wing — but not exclusively so. At different times, some people who were generally of the left have thought to use popular anti-Jewish prejudices as a weapon against capitalism, for example by specially denouncing prominent Jewish capitalists, or taking “the Rothschilds” as epitomising capitalist power.

The German Marxist August Bebel famously described such anti-capitalist antisemitism as “the socialism of the fools”.

Frederick Engels had to explain to the French socialist Paul Lafargue, a son-in-law of Karl Marx, why this was unacceptable. The great Russian populist movement Narodnaya Volya — they killed the Tsar in 1881 — welcome the terrible pogrom movement that began that same year as the people asserting themselves against oppression.

The German Communist Party in the early 1920s experimented with a similar approach, though Ruth Fischer, one of the CP leaders responsible, was herself Jewish.

The ideas popular on the Trotskyist left now originated with Stalinism in the late 1930s, and in the late 40s to early 1950s. Stalinism was not left-wing. It was a bastardisation of right and pseudo-left. It was outside the old left-right division in politics. But its people thought of themselves as left-wing.

There are other examples.

The ostensible left now uses Israel as an archetype of “imperialism”. Its insistence that Israel be done away with pits it comprehensively against Jews who identify with Israel, however critically.

That insistence is not racism. It is antisemitism in its own way. Antisemitism is a historical shape-shifter. There are many strands and strains of antisemitism in history. Christian antisemitism did not necessarily want to kill Jews. In principle it wanted to convert the Jews to Christianity, to do them the favour of saving their souls.

**“Left-wing” antisemitism has more in common with that than with racist antisemitism.**

# “A refusal to settle down”

**Klara Feigenbaum, a Trotskyist activist of Romanian origin, known as Irène, died at the age of 97 in March 2017, a year ago.**

Alongside her then-partner David Korner, alias Barta, she founded the “Groupe Communiste”, which in 1944 took the name “Union Communiste” (UC), and which led the 1947 Renault strike alongside the militant worker Pierre Bois, at a time when the CGT and the PCF (which was then in the government) were opposed to all strikes. It was from this group that would later spring Voix ouvrière (although Irène was only active in it for the first few years) and then Lutte ouvrière and Fraction l’Étincelle (a part of the New Anticapitalist Party, NPA).

**A tribute by Mathieu and Richard Moyon, Klara and David’s sons.**

**[Irène’s] life as an activist was defined by a refusal to settle down. Everything she did was an attempt to make an active, concrete political response, as swiftly as possible, to a situation marked by grave crises, and threatened by actual catastrophes.**

Irène didn’t pursue activism for a living, or for fame, or to give meaning to her life: but to put an end to injustice and to the poverty of the human condition. As a child, she saw that good works and charity were nothing but sticking plasters required by the capitalist mode of production. It was the discovery of Marxism, its clarifying analyses and its rational method that gave her the key – the only key – to evaluate events and to help history on its way towards the ending of the class struggle through the abolition of social classes, authentic world communism and a society with neither money nor oppression, where people simply manage objects: not other people.

In 1936, Klara was 16. When news of the first Moscow Trial broke, she turned her back on the Romanian Communist Party, to which she had been close. In July 1936, the Spanish revolution began: “We could feel a tremor on the air as far away as Bucharest”, she said. Along with three friends, she decided to go there. But very quickly, Stalinism strangled the Spanish revolution. The young Romanians stayed in France and joined the International Workers’ Party (POI). Klara became Louise.

The declaration of war in September 1939 and Daladier’s ban on communist organisations scattered the Trotskyist activists, and saw many of them lose their way politically. Louise and Barta published three editions of *L’Ouvrier* in which they denounced the coming repression and butchery, and what they termed the imperialist war. Louise and Lucien were arrested and jailed for three months in the Petite-Roquette prison [in Paris]. They were released before France’s capitulation.

The Occupation changed things. Louise became Irène. Recruiting and providing theoretical and practical training for young activists (like Mathieu Bucholz, murdered by the Stalinists in 1944 and Pierre Bois, who would later lead the May 1947 Renault strike) and the publication of *La Lutte de classes* took priority, in view of an analysis that predicted that the Second World War would create a revolutionary wave similar to the one that followed the First World War. The aim was to prepare the working class. Analysing the international situation, denouncing the imperialist war and the lot of the working class which was its cannon fodder, attacking the



dead-end of nationalism: the articles in *La Lutte de classes* display an impressive breadth of political vision. While Barta took on the greater part of the analysis and writing, he was assisted by Irène, upon whose shoulders rested the functioning of the whole organisation.

But the predicted revolutionary wave did not materialise. Upon Liberation, the activists of the Union Communiste had to confront a novel situation: the participation of the French Communist Party (PCF) in government, and its opposition to any action by the working class (“the strike is a weapon of the trusts!”). A space opened up for intransigent denunciation of the government’s policy and of the collaboration of the PCF and the CGT with the government, and of the kind of dictatorship which between them they imposed on the workers. The UC concentrated its meagre forces on the Renault factory at Billancourt.

In April 1947, in spite of violent opposition from the CGT, the strike began in the Collas sector of the factory, where Pierre Bois worked, and quickly spread to the whole plant. A strike committee was set up. Even if its demands weren’t completely met, this strike was victorious: a pay rise, partial pay for strike days, and above all, the breaking of Stalinism’s hold on the workers.

But the danger that the movement could spread and get out of the PCF’s control led the party to have its ministers resign from the government. ... this allowed the PCF and the CGT to regain control of the 1948 strike wave...

Despite the correctness of Barta’s analyses, workers’ day-to-day support of the SDR (the Syndicat Démocratique Renault, created in the wake of the strike), the work of activists and the sympathies of the workers, a new generation of militants did not arise. The UC was exhausted, and tensions arose. Pierre Bois and Barta parted ways. The last issue of *La Lutte de classes* came out on 30 March 1950, spelling the end of the UC. All of Barta’s and Irène’s subsequent efforts at launching common activity came to naught.

A group of the younger activists from the former UC, including Pierre Bois and Robert Barcia (alias Hardy), decided that they would

continue their activity. Organised at first in different groups, Bois and Hardy got together in 1956, in what would become Voix ouvrière and then Lutte ouvrière. But even if this tendency claimed the same heritage, Barta and Irène thought that in reality its politics had nothing to do with those of the UC. Irène thought that, in fact, the group had given up on applying pressure to the course of history. But, in spite of her disagreements, for several years she gave “the young comrades” technical help, typing up workplace bulletins.

Irène would later inspire the re-publication of the UC’s writings, in particular articles from *La Lutte de classes* and *La Voix des travailleurs* but also pamphlets and internal documents which she found in the archives and typed up – again! It was more than just a matter of her wanting to give these actions, analyses, writings and activists the prominence they deserved. It was another way for her to prepare the way for the future, by politically arming future generations. In that sense it was true that right up until the end, Irène was full of optimism: that revolutionary optimism which persists in spite of anything.

In the face of the attacks carried out in 1995 by some youth from working-class estates, like Khaled Kelkal, Irène saw the pressing need to bring socialist political ideas back into neighbourhoods that had become activist deserts. The bulletin *Cinquième zone*, which she helped found, and assiduously proofread, addressed itself “to young people from the estates whom everyone talks about but never to, and certainly never about politics.” Today, we might well regret bitterly the fact that she didn’t bring the bigger organisations along with her in this initiative.

**A fighter, funny, modest, clear-sighted, intransigent, devoted, sometimes hot-tempered, generous, driven to share her culture and learning, those of us who had the chance to know her, to learn from her and fight alongside her were lucky, because in so doing we were able to live for a while in the society of the future.**

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# The return of racist science

## SCIENCE

By Les Hearn

**A recent article by Gavin Evans in the *Guardian* has drawn attention to a resurgence in the idea that race and intelligence are linked.<sup>1</sup> These terms, though commonly used, are quite difficult to define...and for good reason. (see separate boxes)**

In the 19th century, despite the religious tradition that "God... hath made of one blood all nations of men," it was axiomatic that there were different races with different abilities. Since European powers were dominant, "Caucasoid" (white) peoples were held superior. Other races were divided into Mongoloid (yellow), Malay (brown), American (red), and Negroid (black), in a hierarchy linked with the darkness of their skin.

For Darwin, the races were too similar not to have descended from a common ancestor but others held that the races had evolved separately. White slave-owners held their African slaves to be of a different, inferior, species which justified their enslavement. This idea that inferior races were liable to enslavement was unaltered by the fact of millions of white slaves being held by the Ottoman Empire from the 16th to 19th centuries, captured by Barbary pirates from as far north as Iceland.

Despite Darwin, as late as 1939, the prominent anthropologist Carleton S Coon divided people into Caucasoid, Congoid/Capoid, Mongoloid (including native Americans), and Australoid, believing them to be descended from different populations of Homo erectus, a view which some hold even now. Coon's views were certainly of interest to those who believed in a hierarchy of races.

However, another prominent anthropologist, Alfred Kroeber (father of Ursula K Le Guin), actively opposed racist interpretations of human differences throughout his long career.

It is now accepted that Homo sapiens is one species with superficial differences in facial features, hair, eye and skin colours, and so on. Genes<sup>2</sup> for these are distributed according to environmental factors such as temperature or sunlight. Other genes seem equally distributed and equally variable, with some exceptions, such as genes for lactose tolerance in dairy farming societies, genes for sickle cell trait in areas where malaria is prevalent, and genes for cystic fibrosis where tuberculosis is common. These genes have survival value in these environments.

However, this doesn't stop some people asserting that there are genetic differences between ethnic groups which affect characteristics such as intelligence and tendencies to violence (e.g. alt-right hero Steve Bannon, fan of the Front National). DNA structure discoverer James Watson also strayed out of his field to assert that melanin was linked to libido.

There are appreciable differences in habitats occupied by different groups of humans, and in their cultures, but there is no evidence that humans of particular groups are genetically any more or less able to adapt to, act on, or alter their environments. The differences in the state of "advancement" of various human cultures already have an adequate explanation, as Jared Diamond says.<sup>3</sup>

Diamond, an expert on the birds of Papua New Guinea, was talking to a local politician who asked him "Why is it that you white people developed so much cargo and brought it to New Guinea, but we black people had little cargo of our own?" Diamond rejected the simplistic explanation that

different "races" had different levels of ability and looked instead at their different environments.

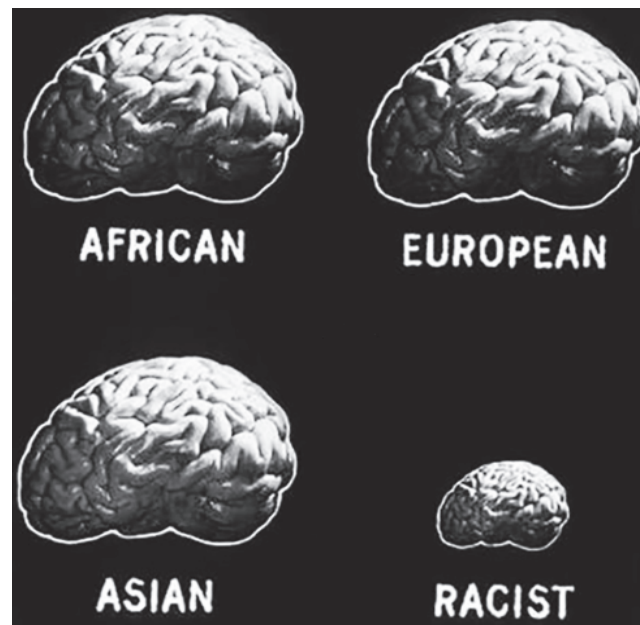
He argues that indigenous New Guineans and Australians are probably more intelligent than the white colonists, despite their "stone age" technology, since they easily master advanced industrial technology when given the opportunity. Caucasians were simply luckier: their civilisation arose in an area where metals could be obtained, plants and animals suitable for domestication existed, and the resulting denser populations encouraged the development of resistance to disease.

All this begs the question of what intelligence is (see box). It is often assumed that the complex abilities humans have to share ideas and work with each other to gain their living can be measured, not in real life tasks, but with pencil and paper! This has given rise to IQ testing which inevitably reflects middle class Caucasian culture. Diamond speaks of how "stupid" he felt in the company of New Guineans who could follow faint jungle trails or erect a shelter but who would fail dismally in an IQ test!

Early IQ testing led to theories about the intelligence of immigrants to the USA. Robert Yerkes' tests, used to evaluate draftees in World War One, showed that southern and eastern European immigrants had lower IQs than native-born Americans; that Americans from the northern states scored higher than those from southern states; and that African Americans scored lower than White Americans. Some began to talk about a "Nordic" race as being the most intelligent.

Partly driven by revulsion at the Nazis' racist policies, scientists began to recognise the unscientific nature of IQ testing, ignoring as it did environmental and cultural factors. However, anti-immigration, eugenics, and segregation lobbies continued to use IQ tests to support their theories.

Modern racist theories of intelligence emerged some 60 years ago with arguments that genetic differences made it necessary to segregate black and white children in school. In the 1960s, transistor inventor (!) William Shockley claimed that black children were innately unable to learn as well as white ones and psychologist Arthur Jensen argued that it was pointless trying to improve education for black children as their genes were to blame for their poor attainment (rather than poverty, discrimination, racist violence, un-



employment, poor housing, and worse schools).

Murray and Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve* (1994) refined the race and intelligence theory to argue that poor, especially poor black, people were inherently less intelligent than white or Asian Americans. They argued for reducing immigration, against welfare policies that "encouraged" poor people to have babies and against affirmative action. More recent opponents of affirmative action include Jordan B Peterson and James Damore (author of the Google memo opposing inclusion and diversity policies).<sup>4</sup>

Damore's is an interesting case. He argues that women are inherently less likely to excel in software engineering for biological (i.e. genetic) reasons but then argues for dropping all diversity and inclusion initiatives, including those for black and Hispanic people. Logically, he must feel that they are also genetically unfitted for software engineering...

Intelligence is not what intelligence tests measure. Practising intelligence tests can improve one's attainment (as can having a good breakfast!) but doesn't necessarily mean that one is more "intelligent." But even if intelligence was simply determined by genes, it would still be the case that people should be encouraged to fulfil their potential.

**I don't normally agree with the CBI but, when they said recently that thoughts, questions, creativity and team-working were just as desirable outcomes of education as academic achievement, they referenced a wider and more humanly relevant concept of intelligence.**

### Notes

1. Gavin Evans 'The unwelcome revival of race science.' [www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/02/the-unwelcome-revival-of-race-science](http://www.theguardian.com/news/2018/mar/02/the-unwelcome-revival-of-race-science)
2. Genes occur in different forms called alleles. All humans have the same genes but the different forms (alleles) are present in differing proportions in different populations. However, there is no general pattern to these differing proportions that would support the idea of separate races.
3. Guns, Germs and Steel, Jared Diamond (1997)
4. See [www.workersliberty.org/story/2017-09-21/google-memo-and-real-bias](http://www.workersliberty.org/story/2017-09-21/google-memo-and-real-bias)
5. David Adam in *The Genius Within* (2018)
6. Merriam-Webster online
7. Sniekers et al. *Nature Genetics* 2017;49(7):1107-12
8. See <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/race-is-a-social-construct-scientists-argue/> and Biological races in humans <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23684745>

## What is intelligence?

**In Latin, intelligens means understanding and comes from inter (between, among) and legere (to choose, select or pick out, and later to read).**

An excellent definition of intelligence is "the ability to use what you have got to get what you want."<sup>5</sup> Modern dictionaries have subtly changed this: "The ability to learn or understand or to deal with new or trying situations; the ability to apply knowledge to manipulate one's environment or to think abstractly as measured by objective criteria (such as tests)."<sup>6</sup> [my emphasis]

Thus, a general ability to understand one's environment and manipulate it has become reduced to skill with abstract tests of certain abilities which produce a number. Other tests that produce numbers are to be found in the educational system but, as the CBI recently complained, success in "exam factories" (i.e. schools) does not necessarily lead to success in work and life.

But are there genes for it? Yes — human genes!

We all share the vast majority of our genes and those genes give us our large (but not so large as Neanderthal) brains and they give us the ability to learn, which is key to mastery of our environments. But are there genes for the narrowly-defined intelligence which is measured by intelligence tests? No doubt! A study published in 2017<sup>7</sup> analysed the genomes of 78,000 people of European

descent and identified up to 52 genes associated with a general intelligence factor, g (a measure that various IQ tests seem to share).

What this means is that these genes, which all humans possess, occur as two or more slightly different alleles:<sup>2</sup> some alleles are associated with higher values of g, others with lower. Most of these genes seem to be involved in brain development or nerve functioning. There is a massive correlation between educational attainment and certain alleles but this is hardly surprising since intelligence tests measure the sort of knowledge and abilities taught in schools and tested in exams.

There are also moderate positive associations with brain volume, autism spectrum disorder, giving up smoking(?), longevity... and moderate negative associations with Alzheimer's disease, depressive symptoms, ever having smoked, schizophrenia, "neuroticism"... Other factors, such as BMI, insomnia, ADHD, have weaker negative links. These are modest conclusions, given the size of the study.

**It would seem that knowledge of an individual's genes would allow little to be predicted apart from educational attainment...but this can be found out anyway through the education process. It is difficult to see why this research has been done and what lessons it has.**



# Where we stand

Today one class, the working class, lives by selling its labour power to another, the capitalist class, which owns the means of production.

The capitalists' control over the economy and their relentless drive to increase their wealth causes poverty, unemployment, the blighting of lives by overwork, imperialism, the destruction of the environment and much else.

Against the accumulated wealth and power of the capitalists, the working class must unite to struggle against capitalist power in the workplace and in wider society.

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty wants socialist revolution: collective ownership of industry and services, workers' control, and a democracy much fuller than the present system, with elected representatives recallable at any time and an end to bureaucrats' and managers' privileges.

We fight for trade unions and the Labour Party to break with "social partnership" with the bosses and to militantly assert working-class interests.

**In workplaces, trade unions, and Labour organisations; among students; in local campaigns; on the left and in wider political alliances we stand for:**

- Independent working-class representation in politics.
  - A workers' government, based on and accountable to the labour movement.
  - A workers' charter of trade union rights — to organise, to strike, to picket effectively, and to take solidarity action.
  - Taxation of the rich to fund decent public services, homes, education and jobs for all.
  - A workers' movement that fights all forms of oppression.
- Full equality for women, and social provision to free women from domestic labour. For reproductive justice: free abortion on demand; the right to choose when and whether to have children. Full equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Black and white workers' unity against racism.
- Open borders.
  - Global solidarity against global capital — workers everywhere have more in common with each other than with their capitalist or Stalinist rulers.
  - Democracy at every level of society, from the smallest workplace or community to global social organisation.
  - Equal rights for all nations, against imperialists and predators big and small.
  - Maximum left unity in action, and openness in debate.

If you agree with us, please take some copies of *Solidarity* to sell — and join us!



## Events

### Monday 2 April

Minnie Lansbury — teacher, suffragette and rebel councillor  
12.45pm, The Victory Inn, 6 Duke Street, Brighton BN1 1AH  
[bit.ly/2pJbkEi](http://bit.ly/2pJbkEi)

### Tuesday 10 April

Sheffield Capital study course  
7pm, Workspace, Sheffield University Students Union, Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TG  
[bit.ly/2IYVKMY](http://bit.ly/2IYVKMY)

### Saturday 14 April

Unseat Wandsworth Tory Council  
11am, Outside PCS Union building, 160 Falcon Road, London SW11 2LN  
[bit.ly/2Gfdd1R](http://bit.ly/2Gfdd1R)

### Saturday 14 April

Leeds March for the NHS  
11.30am, Leeds Art Gallery, The Headrow, Leeds LS1 3AA  
[bit.ly/2p8mDpf](http://bit.ly/2p8mDpf)

### Saturday 28 April

Sheffield March for the NHS  
1.30pm, Barker's Pool, Sheffield S1 2JA  
[bit.ly/2IqM5P6](http://bit.ly/2IqM5P6)

### Saturday 5 May

'We are the lions, Mr Manager' — play about the Grunwick strike  
7.30pm, Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess St, Manchester M1 6DD  
[bit.ly/2FHsS9N](http://bit.ly/2FHsS9N)

Have an event you want listing? Email: [solidarity@workersliberty.org](mailto:solidarity@workersliberty.org)

More online at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)

Workers' Liberty

@workersliberty

## Labour set to gain in council elections

### LABOUR

By Keith Road

**The local government election campaign has now started. On 3 May there will be elections in 150 councils, with 45 of these being all out. Corbyn's Labour is expected to do well, particularly in big cities.**

After May there will be more left-wing, Corbyn supporting councillors. There continue to be many stitch ups in Labour and plenty of right-wingers managed to be re-elected however, including notable cases like Haringey, there has been an upsurge in newer and returned activists being selected. They will at least want to shake up the way that Labour has run local government since 2010.

Since 2010 there has been little resistance from Labour run councils to central government cuts. Cuts may not be the first choice of Labour councillors, but there has

been little attempt from Labour build a fight to stop or reverse them.

In many areas Labour councillors boast about the money they have saved, how they have gone further than required to "improve efficiency." But what is actually happening is the shutting down of libraries, of children's centres and care provision for the elderly.

### VICTORIES

**There have been some victories against cuts to local services or unpopular schemes like the Haringey Development Vehicle, but now left-wing councillors will have to provide alternatives.**

In Haringey local parties came together for a day-long conference to discuss the manifesto but the decisions could not be binding. In places where such discussions have not happened, local manifestos are likely to be uninspiring.

A single vote or even a handful of votes against a Labour group budget proposals is will be ineffec-

tive. Campaigning against the cuts, starting a fight against the government, and supporting strike action against job losses and cuts to service provision is central. All of this would be tremendously inspiring, and if it happened across the country could give the labour movement some confidence in defeating the government.

The leadership of the Labour Party have been unclear on what councillors should do. When Corbyn launched the local election campaign in Trafford, (where Labour needs to gain only one seat to take control from the Tories) his speech contained little strategy for Labour councils.

A key promise missing from Corbyn's speech was what Labour would do about the spending cuts that have happened since 2010.

**The obvious popular measure would be to call for these cuts to be reversed and for money to be returned to local councils so they can provide the services we need.**

## Starting to reimagine local government

By Ruth Willis

**On Saturday 24 March around 100 Labour Party activists attended "Re-imagining Local Government: London for the many and not the few".**

This event came out of discussions between London Momentum members and left activists. We wanted to create a forum for the left to think about what it would do if it won seats in the May elections.

An ill prepared left, devoid of strategy and ideas could be subsumed in the right-wing swamp that currently makes up the majority of councils. Local government policy is dominated by a managerial ethos in which officers dictate many of the decisions and councillors act as administrators of Tory cuts.

John Burgess, from Barnet Union branch secretary spoke of their fight against outsourcing and the need for Labour to commit to bringing services in house and working with the unions.

In the session "From the streets to the council chamber", activists talked about how to bring local campaigns and their demands into the Labour Party and how to campaign locally for manifesto conferences. Younger Labour members listened, riveted, as John Dunn spoke about the battle fought by Clay Cross councillors in the early 70s, and how they mobilised the community to defy Tory rent increases.

There were areas of discussion and difference. While cooperative principles were welcomed there was also criticism of the way the right have used coops as a soft option to justify further outsourcing. It was pointed out that mutuals can

have worse working conditions. As cooperatives have to compete in a capitalist market they find it hard to be profitable without massive subsidy.

There was discussion about Labour councillors opposing cuts completely. Some council candidates said that they wouldn't vote for cuts while others said that to do so would risk expulsion from Labour. Most agreed that Labour's rules about the functioning of Labour groups and councillors need to be challenged. Harrow councillor Pamela Fitzpatrick said that while councillors can abstain on matters of conscience this is very

narrowly defined and doesn't include not voting for cuts to services for working-class people. It was collectively agreed to write a model submission for Labour's Democracy Review on some of these issues, including opposing the restrictions on councillors voting for needs budgets and against cuts.

The event was lively, political, and brought together those who want to change the way Labour acts locally. We need more events like this.

**There will be a follow up after the May elections, when we will have to put our ideas into practice.**

## NEC slate debates

By Will Sefton

**The decision of the Labour Representation Committee, Grassroots Black Left and Red Labour to challenge the official Centre Left Grassroots Alliance slate for Labour's National Executive is a tactical mistake.**

We agree with these comrades that the method selection for the CLGA slate has been opaque for some time. It is unclear how groups are able to be involved and level of control they then have over the agreed candidates once in office.

The decision of Momentum to unilaterally declare their full slate and push that through the CLGA is also unwelcome. However, with only a short time left to get local Party nominations, and the challenge of standing and winning in nine seats all running at once,

splitting the left vote is unwise.

The LRC have said they will not necessarily challenge the whole slate, nor even any of it, if they cannot get consensus on such a course. The final decision will be made on 6 May 2018. We urge comrades across the Labour left to discuss the potential for reforming or replacing the CLGA and choosing candidates on a democratic and political basis.

Those who have seized on this initiative with violent apolitical hyperbole across social media have also got it badly wrong. A decision to hold discussions should not be branded as a wrecking operation, or an attempt to destroy unity, or worse of all "scabbing."

**Discussions on the political basis of future NEC slates should begin now, but to stand alternative candidates now would be a mistake.**



# UUK backs down, but no deal yet

By Gemma Short

On Friday 23 March UCU members were emailed by the union with a "proposal for resolving the dispute" on pensions from Universities UK.

The new proposal is a significant step back by the employer, and shows victory could be within reach, but does not guarantee enough for strikes to be called off just yet.

The new proposal commits UUK to a re-valuation of the USS scheme for the first time. This is a significant step back for UUK. This re-valuation is to be done by a formally agreed joint expert panel, comprised of actuarial and academic experts nominated in equal numbers from both sides. This is a significant change in how the USS pension scheme is managed. To allow the re-valuation to happen, the current USS terms will stay in place until at least April 2019, although the original proposed changes to the scheme would have only taken effect from April 2019 anyway. It is yet to be seen if the Pensions Regulator will waive the 30 June deadline for valuation of USS.

It is not clear what will happen after April 2019 if the joint panel breaks down or fails to deliver.

Some UCU members have raised criticism of the joint-expert panel. The UCU is in effect signing up to be bound by the decisions of the panel. There is no guarantee that the panel members will be accountable to UCU members even in the limited way that the current negotiators are, and it seems the panel outcomes won't be subject to a ballot of UCU members. It also shifts the dispute into the realm of "expert" technical discussion over methods of valuation and "whose numbers are right", rather than an industrial/political question of pension provision.

A key point in the dispute up until now has been keeping the defined benefit scheme, rather than being moved to a defined contribution scheme which would see cuts to income in retirement. The proposal says, "If in the light of [the valuation] contributions or benefits need to be adjusted in either direction, both parties are committed to



agree to recommend to the JNC and the trustee *measures aimed at stabilising the fund to provide a guaranteed pension broadly comparable with current arrangements.*" [emphasis added]

This is unclear. Will "guaranteed pension broadly comparable with current arrangements" effectively mean retention of the defined benefit scheme, or something different? The UCU leadership is selling it as such, but it is far from certain. Some UUK-commissioned financial reports concluded that defined contribution would only be 10-20% less in retirement; would that be "broadly comparable"? It could mean something similar to the recent CWU-Royal Mail deal which agreed a "collective defined contribution" scheme, for which there is currently no legal framework. There are other possible hybrid schemes that could result from future fights and negotiations.

The proposal also refers to the "affordability" of the scheme. Such references may in effect act as a precondition on the outcome of the

joint valuation panel.

However, this is the first serious offer from UUK; they are backing down and the job now is to keep pushing them backwards. This is also a proposal over which there has so far been no negotiation between the UCU's negotiators and UUK; that negotiation process should happen.

The momentum of this dispute should not be squandered. It will not be easy to re-mobilise a dispute in a year's time if the outcome of the joint panel is not good enough.

On the Monday and Tuesday before the UCU's Higher Education Committee meeting, a number of UCU branches across the country passed motions criticising sections of the proposal and called for assurances on a defined benefit guarantee amongst other things.

**As Solidarity goes to press, we don't know what the UCU's Higher Education Committee will recommend. If the proposal is put to members as an offer in its current state, members should reject it.**

## For a national strike committee

**A motion calling for a national strike committee to be set up was passed at a Sheffield University UCU meeting.**

The motion states that "members feel a lack of ownership over the dispute at the national level, as distinct to the high level of ownership they feel in relation to the dispute at the local level" and that "Many members of HEC are not based at striking institutions". It also said "that while some aspects of negotiations are confidential, in order to maintain a sense of ownership of the dispute amongst the membership and therefore to maintain members' incredible resolve to take industrial action members must have a sense of how negotiations are progressing."

The full motion can be viewed at: [bit.ly/ucumotion](http://bit.ly/ucumotion)

UCU London Region has called a national co-ordination meeting on 28 April where rank-and-file coordination of the dispute could be organised.

**For details of the event see: [bit.ly/ucumeet](http://bit.ly/ucumeet)**

# Universities plan job and course cuts

By Peggy Carter

**Job cuts have been announced at the Open University and at Liverpool University.**

Cuts at the Open University would result in 41 degree courses being axed, leaving only 71, reducing the number of courses available by a third. The University plans to save £100m from its £420m annual budget, yet the University has spent £2.5m on consultancy fees to

KMPG.

From money put aside for redundancies, the UCU estimates that the University is planning for at least 250-300 voluntary redundancies in the coming year, and for compulsory redundancies to follow.

The University of Liverpool, whose Vice-Chancellor is President of UUK, has announced plans to cut at least 220 jobs. The plan is apparently motivated by a wish to improve rankings for teaching and

research and become a "top 100 university globally".

Yet students surveyed by the Higher Education Policy Institute (P48) said if universities wanted to save money they should cut spending on "buildings" and "sports and social facilities".

**When asked what they should not cut, their top answers were "learning facilities", "teaching hours", "student support services" and "academic support".**

# Victories at London schools

By Gemma Short

**School workers across London have been striking against academy proposals, terms and conditions, appraisal, and management styles.**

In January National Education Union (NEU) and GMB members at Charlton Park academy in Greenwich won an agreement that nationally negotiated terms and conditions would apply to all staff (see: [bit.ly/2Gh5Six](http://bit.ly/2Gh5Six)).

Campaigns against academisation in Newham have linked up NEU members, parents, and Labour Party activists. Strikes have happened at Avenue Primary school, Cumberland school, and Keir Hardie school.

The strikes have stopped academisation at Keir Hardie school, where parents were sent a letter just before the Easter holidays saying plans for academisation were now off the table. Avenue Primary has been unable to convert to an academy as scheduled by Easter as a local parent has won the first stage of their legal challenge at the High Court to the consultation process. The legal challenge, which could reach Judicial Review, could have significant consequences nationally.

The campaign within the Labour Party in Newham has turned around a council which previously backed academisation to a situation where a Full Council meeting in March passed a motion saying it "strongly discourages



schools from considering academisation" and calling for parental and staff ballots in schools that still plan to academise.

Strikes against academisation have also happened at Village school in Brent, though the academisation was unfortunately not stopped.

Strikes against appraisal systems at City of London Academy in Southwark resulted in victory after three days of strikes (see: [bit.ly/2GfMbrk](http://bit.ly/2GfMbrk)), and NEU members at Leopold School in Brent won a last minute deal which they discussed on the school gates on the planned day of strike before returning to work over an "unacceptable management style".

Victories were also won at a number of other schools before strikes took place, including Haverstock in Camden over redundancies, Oaklands in Tower Hamlets over absence policies, Nightingale in Enfield over workload, and St Aloysius in Islington over appraisal.

**Strikes are also planned at Connaught school in Walthamstow over pay (see [bit.ly/2plj2yz](http://bit.ly/2plj2yz)) after Easter.**

# Rail strikes continue

By Ollie Moore

**Guards on Northern Rail struck on 26 March, as the RMT union began the latest round of action aimed at halting the imposition of "Driver Only Operation".**

Official Northern figures said they were able to run 50% of its timetabled service, but union sources say the company's estimates are inflated.

RMT members on South Western Railway are also due to take action in the coming weeks, with a ban on rest day working planned for the Easter weekend.

On Greater Anglia, RMT secured an 80% majority for strikes on an

80% turnout in a recent re-ballot, renewing the mandate for further strikes. On MerseyRail, the union is due to meet the employer for talks at conciliation service Acas to discuss a possible deal to retain a second member of staff on all trains. Questions remain as to whether the second staff member will be a safety-critical guard.

**Meanwhile, strikes on London's Docklands Light Railway are planned from 28-30 March and 20-24 April, in a dispute over the contractor Keolis Amey Dockland's failure to respect agreements and procedures around rostering, health and safety, and training.**

# Victory for Daily Mail cleaners

By Charlotte Zalens

**Cleaners who clean the offices of the Daily Mail newspaper have won the London Living Wage.**

The cleaners, who are employed by contractor Mitie, were being battled for strikes by the United Voices of the World union and had

been threatened by Mitie's management that they would be sacked if they struck. Over 100,000 people signed an online petition written by the cleaners supporting their demand for the Living Wage.

**Cleaners have won a 25% pay rise from the national living (minimum) wage of £7.50 an hour.**



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For a workers' government

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## Socialism Makes Sense

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**Book your ticket online today at [www.workersliberty.org/ideas](http://www.workersliberty.org/ideas)**

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